

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-10 NEA-11 USPS-02 USSS-00 FBIE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

SPC-03 SAM-01 AID-20 EB-11 EUR-25 IO-14 CU-04 OPR-02

DRC-01 SS-20 A-01 NSC-10 SCA-01 /186 W

----- 089845

R 070855Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 51240

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS GABORONE 0196

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

PRETORIA FOR RSO

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS BC SF

SUBJ: DEATH OF SASO LEADER TIRO

REF : GABORONE 0192

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF PRESS RELEASE FROM GOB POLICE OFFICIALS
AND OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT CONCERNING THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM
ONKGOPOTSE TIRO: BEGIN TEXT: POLICE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE
DEATH OF ONKGOPOTSE TIRO, PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
STUDENTS MOVEMENT AND PERMANENT ORGANIZER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
STUDENTS ORGANIZATION, INDICATE THAT AN EXPLOSION OCCURRED WHEN
TIRO OPENED A SMALL PARCEL WHICH HAD BEEN DELIVERED TO HIM
LAST FRIDAY. THE PARCEL WAS COLLECTED FROM A GABORONE POSTAL
BOX BY A MESSENGER FROM KGALE MISSION. IT IS NOW KNOWN THAT THE
PARCEL BORE SWISS STAMPS, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED WHERE
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IT ORIGINATED. POLICE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE DEATH ARE

CONTINUING.

THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT HAS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT -
THE GOVERNMENT OF BOTSWANA HAS BEEN DEEPLY SHOCKED BY THE BRUTAL
MURDER OF ONKGOPOTSE TIRO. MR. TIRO HAS DURING THE LAST FEW
YEARS OF HIS LIFE BEEN AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF THE SO-CALLED
SOUTH AFRICAN WAY OF LIFE UNDER WHICH BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS
ARE SUBJECTED TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND MANY OTHER INDIGNITIES.
AND IN SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE DENIAL TO BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS
OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS, ONKGOPOTSE TIRO HAD INCURRED THE DEEP
DISPLEASURE OF CERTAIN POWERFUL CIRCLES IN SOUTH AFRICA. MR. TIRO'S
SUDDEN AND CRUEL DEATH WILL IN NO WAY DETRACT FROM THE VALIDITY
OF HIS CRITICISMS OF CONDITIONS OF IN SOUTH AFRICA. NOR WILL
IT INTIMIDATE OTHERS FROM SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE SITUATION IN
THAT COUNTRY. FOR ITS PART, THE BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT STRONGLY
CONDEMNS THE INHUMAN AND DASTARDLY MANNER IN WHICH MR. TIRO'S
LIFE WAS TAKEN. THE GOVERNMENT WISHES TO STATE UNEQUIVOCALLY
THAT THIS KIND OF TERRORISM WILL NOT MAKE IT CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE
TOWARD THOSE WHO SEEK REFUGE IN BOTSWANA FROM OPPRESSION IN
THEIR OWN COUNTRIES. THE BOMB WHICH KILLED MR. TIRO WAS, AFTER
ALL NOT THE FIRST TO EXPLODE IN BOTSWANA. THERE HAD BEEN TWO
OTHERS BEFORE IT, BOTH AIMED AT POLITICAL REFUGEES. AN EAST
AFRICAN AIRWAYS PLANE, WHICH WAS DUE TO FLY REFUGEES OUT OF
BOTSWANA, AND THE REFUGEE CENTER WERE BLOWN UP IN FRANCISTOWN.
END TEXT.

2. COMMENT: THE TWO FRANCISTOWN BOMBINGS REFERRED TO IN THE
STATEMENT OCCURRED PRIOR TO BOTSWANA'S INDEPENDENCE. WHILE
THE GOB DID ALLOW TIRO TO STAY IN BOTSWANA, IT HAD NOT
YET MADE A DECISION ON HIS REQUEST, AND THE REQUEST OF THE OTHER
SASO MEMBERS, FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM IN BOTSWANA.
NELSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BOMBING, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, DEATHS, POLICE INVESTIGATIONS, CHIEF OF STATE, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974GABORO00196
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: GABORONE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740250/aaaabujf.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: GABORONE 0192
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: WorrelSW
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 MAR 2002 by elbezejf>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2002 by WorrelSW>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEATH OF SASO LEADER TIRO
TAGS: PINS, BC, SF, SASO, (TIRO, ABRAHAM ONKGOPOTSE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005